

7.0 EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

In accordance with Section 15128 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must contain a statement briefly indicating the reasons that various potential significant effects of a project were determined not to be significant. Based on the Initial Study and Notice of Preparation prepared for the proposed projects (Appendix A), Imperial County has determined that the proposed projects would not have the potential to cause significant adverse effects associated with the topics identified below. Therefore, these topics are not addressed in this EIR; however, the rationale for eliminating these topics is briefly discussed below.

7.1 FORESTRY RESOURCES

The project sites are located on privately owned, undeveloped agricultural land. No portion of the project sites (or the immediate vicinity) is zoned or designated as forest lands, timberlands, or Timberland Production. As such, the projects would not result in a conflict with existing zoning or cause rezoning. Therefore, implementation of the proposed projects would not impact forestry resources.

7.2 MINERAL RESOURCES

The project sites are not used for mineral resource production and the projects do not any form of any mineral extraction. According to the Conservation and Open Space Element of the County of Imperial General Plan, no known mineral resources occur within the project sites, nor do the project sites contain mapped mineral resources. As such, the proposed projects would not adversely affect the availability of any known mineral resources within the project area.

7.3 RECREATION

Combined the four projects would be staffed with up to 24 full-time employees, which would not significantly increase the use or accelerate the deterioration of regional parks or other recreational facilities. The temporary increase of population during construction that might be caused by an influx of workers would be minimal and not cause a detectable increase in or impact on the use of parks. Additionally, the projects do not include or require the expansion of recreational facilities.

7.4 POPULATION AND HOUSING

The proposed project sites have been used for and are currently being used for agricultural production. Development of housing is not proposed as part of the projects. The four projects combined will be staffed with up to 24 full time employees to maintain the facility seven days a week during normal daylight hours. The facilities will operate seven days per week, generating electricity during normal daylight hours when the solar energy is available. To ensure optimal photovoltaic (PV) (or concentrated photovoltaic [CPV]) output, the solar panels will be maintained 24 hours a day/seven days a week. The proposed projects would not result in a substantial population growth, as the number of employees required to operate and maintain the facilities is minimal. A total of four residences are located within the project sites. These residences would not be relocated as part of the proposed project; therefore, no impact associated with displacement would result.

7.5 PUBLIC SERVICES

Schools, Parks and Other Facilities

The proposed projects do not include the development of residential land uses that would result in an increase in population or student generation. Construction of the proposed projects would not result in an increase in student population within any school district that would serve the project sites. Therefore, the proposed projects would have no impact on Imperial County schools.

7.0 Effects Found Not to Be Significant

Operation of the proposed projects would require minimal full-time staff (for security, maintenance, etc.). Therefore, substantial permanent increases in population that would adversely affect local parks, libraries and other public facilities (such as post offices) are not expected. Therefore, no impacts are identified for these issue areas.

7.6 UTILITIES

Wastewater and Stormwater

The proposed projects would generate a minimal volume of wastewater during construction. During construction activities, wastewater would be contained within portable toilet facilities and disposed of at an approved site. Operation of the proposed projects could include up to four operations and maintenance (O&M) buildings. Wastewater generation would be minimal and would be treated via an on-site septic system associated with each of the O&M buildings. The proposed projects would not exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The projects do not require new storm drainage facilities because the proposed solar facilities would not generate a significant increase in the amount of runoff water during operations. Water from solar panel washing would continue to percolate through the ground, as a majority of the surfaces within the project area would remain pervious; therefore the projects would not result in impacts with regards to wastewater or storm drainage facilities.

Solid Waste

During construction and operation of the projects, waste generation will be minor. Solid waste will be disposed of using a locally-licensed waste hauling service, most likely Allied Waste. There are over 40 solid waste facilities listed in Imperial County in the CalRecycle database. Trash would likely be hauled to the Calexico Solid Waste Site located in Calexico or the CR&R Material Recovery Transfer Station located in El Centro. The Calexico Solid Waste site has approximately 1.1 million cubic yards of capacity (reporting date July 2009) and is estimated to remain in operation through 2077. The CR&R Material Recovery and Transfer station has a maximum permitted throughput of 99 tons/day. No closure date has been reported for this facility (<http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/SWFacilities/Directory/13-AA-0109/Detail/>). Therefore, there is ample landfill capacity throughout the County to receive the minor amount of solid waste generated by project construction and operation.

Additionally, because the proposed projects would generate solid waste during construction and operation, they will be required to comply with state and local requirements for waste reduction and recycling; including the 1989 California Integrated Waste Management Act and the 1991 California Solid Waste Reuse and Recycling Access Act of 1991. Also, conditions of the conditional use permit (CUP) for each project will contain provisions for recycling and diversion of construction waste per policies of the County.

Further, when the proposed projects reach the end of their operational life, the components will be decommissioned and deconstructed. Decommissioning of the projects will require removal of the solar panels and associated infrastructure and returning the landscape to agriculture. Decommissioning of the transmission line will include the following: disconnecting transmission lines from the bulk power grid; recycling or selling poles, towers and wires; demolishing concrete foundations at or below ground level and either recycling or using the concrete that was removed as fill; and restoring any areas disturbed during the removal process to agricultural use. It is expected that many components will be suitable for recycling or reuse and the facility decommissioning will be designed to optimize such salvage as circumstances allow and in compliance with all local, state, and federal regulations as they exist at the time of decommissioning. Although the disposal of 1,422 acres of solar panels represents a challenge, commercially reasonable efforts will be used to recycle or reuse materials from the decommissioning. All other materials will be disposed of at a licensed facility. Therefore, no impacts are identified for this issue.